



PLAY IS OFTEN TALKED ABOUT AS IF IT WERE A RELIEF FROM SERIOUS LEARNING.

BUT FOR CHILDREN PLAY IS SERIOUS LEARNING.

PLAY IS REALLY THE WORK OF CHILDHOOD.

David Popen



Play is serious business for children!

Young children are always on the go. Whether it's running, climbing, dressing up, taking things apart or putting them back together again, they seldom sit still. While this sometimes chaotic activity may seem like "just play," it's anything but. The reality is there's much more happening beneath the surface.

- | What they're doing | What they're learning |
|----------------------------|--|
| Puzzles | → Problem solving, concentration |
| Playing with blocks | → Shapes, recognizing differences, logic |
| Playing dress up | → Self expression, creativity, imagination |
| Running, jumping, climbing | → How the body works, strength and flexibility |
| Games with friends | → Social skills, taking turns and sharing |
| Singing and dancing | → Listening, rhythm and coordination |
| Sand and water play | → Solids, liquids, measurement |

Play helps stimulate children's intellectual growth. By engaging in different kinds of play, children learn how to reason, hypothesize interact with one another. DSBN Kindergarten programs pair that with academic learning, such as numbers and letters, to help children build a powerful foundation for a successful school career. Best of all? They'll have fun doing it!



Visit us anytime between
10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
on Thursday, January 28

www.dsbni.org/Kindergarten



Join us for our Kindergarten Open Houses!

Visit us
anytime between
10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Thursday, January 28

All children born in 2012
are invited to join us for a
Kindergarten Open House at
your local DSBN public school!

See inside for more information
or visit our Kindergarten website
www.dsbni.org/Kindergarten

DSBNiagara
 @DSBN



REGISTER

Come prepared to play!

DSBN Kindergarten classes are made for active, curious learners. By visiting a Kindergarten Open House, your child will be able to experience everything our schools have to offer to stimulate the mind and create a love of learning and exploration.

As parents, you'll have an opportunity to meet the staff and see how they create an environment where your children will feel safe, supported and inspired to seek answers to all their important questions.

How will I know if my child is ready for Kindergarten?

You'll know I'm ready for school when...

- I'm curious about the world and how it works
- I play well with others
- I start to show my independence
- I know how to share and take turns

Going to school for the first time is a big step. Our schools will be there to help your child make a successful transition, but you can also be confident that they'll be happy and well prepared for their new adventure when they display certain traits.

Parents and guardians have a huge role to play in a child's education. In fact, you are your child's first teacher! Here are some simple things you can do to help your children get ready for that exciting

You can help me get ready for school by...

- Reading with me regularly
- Letting me dress on my own
- Showing me how much is a regular part of our world. (Let me count out silverware, spare change etc.)
- Teaching me to share and play with others
- Encouraging me to ask lots of questions and be curious about the world around me

How will I know if my child is ready for Kindergarten?
If your child was born in 2012, they can start Kindergarten in September 2016.

How do I register?
Start by downloading your child's registration form.

Visit us online at:
www.dsbn.org/schools/openhouse
and click this button



Meeting with Kindergarten Open House when you attend the Kindergarten Open House at your local DSBN school. There will also be forms available at the Open House.

To complete registration, you will need your child's:

- Birth Certificate, Birth Registration or Baptismal Certificate
- Immunization Certificate
- Provincial Health Card
- Proof of address

What if I can't attend the Open House?

No problem! Call your local DSBN elementary school to register and arrange a personal tour.

PORT BRIDGES

Crystal Beach Public School
100 Crystal Beach Dr.
Crystal Beach, ON
(905) 884-3600
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 887-2512

Garrison Road Public School
1110 Garrison Road, East Br.
(905) 871-8800
Kids and Kids Club Child Care
(905) 871-2292

Peace Bridge Public School
100 Niagara Street, Port Br.
(905) 871-8800
Kids and Kids Club Child Care
(905) 871-2292

Highway Public School
2170 Highway 104, Niagara
(905) 894-3751

Stonewall Public School
225 Stonewall Street
(905) 342-3122
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 890-5487

GRIMSBY

Central Public School
1100 Central Ave., Grimsby
(905) 946-5459
Kids and Kids Club Child Care
(905) 946-5459

Grand Avenue Public School
14 Grand Avenue, Grimsby
(905) 946-5459
Kids and Kids Club Child Care
(905) 946-5459

Lakeshore Public School
120 Lakeshore Dr., Grimsby
(905) 946-5459
Kids and Kids Club Child Care
(905) 946-5459

Heffer Public School
100 Heffer Ave., Grimsby
(905) 946-5459
Kids and Kids Club Child Care
(905) 946-5459

Park Public School
217 Main Street, Grimsby
(905) 946-5459
Kids and Kids Club Child Care
(905) 946-5459

South Public School
100 South Ave., Grimsby
(905) 946-5459
Kids and Kids Club Child Care
(905) 946-5459

LINCOLN

Jacob Brown Public School
100 Jacob Brown Dr., Lincoln
(905) 884-3600
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 887-2512

Seaton Grove Public School
100 Seaton Grove Dr., Lincoln
(905) 884-3600
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 887-2512

Twenty Valley Public School
4012 Twenty Valley Dr., Lincoln
(905) 884-3600
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 887-2512

NIAGARA FALLS

Cherrywood Acres Public School
401 Cherrywood Ave., Niagara Falls
(905) 350-0801
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 350-0801

Peninsula Public School
4000 Peninsula Blvd., Niagara Falls
(905) 350-0801
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 350-0801

St. Joseph's Public School
100 St. Joseph's Dr., Niagara Falls
(905) 350-0801
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 350-0801

St. Mary's Public School
100 St. Mary's Dr., Niagara Falls
(905) 350-0801
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
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St. Michael's Public School
100 St. Michael's Dr., Niagara Falls
(905) 350-0801
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Child Care On-site
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St. Patrick's Public School
100 St. Patrick's Dr., Niagara Falls
(905) 350-0801
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Child Care On-site
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St. Peter's Public School
100 St. Peter's Dr., Niagara Falls
(905) 350-0801
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Child Care On-site
(905) 350-0801

St. Thomas Public School
100 St. Thomas Dr., Niagara Falls
(905) 350-0801
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 350-0801



NIAGARA FALLS

Martha Cullum Public School
100 Martha Cullum Dr., Niagara Falls
(905) 350-0801
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 350-0801

Orchard Park Public School
100 Orchard Park Dr., Niagara Falls
(905) 350-0801
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 350-0801

Prentiss Margaret Public School
100 Prentiss Margaret Dr., Niagara Falls
(905) 350-0801
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 350-0801

Glynn A. Green Public School
100 Glynn A. Green Dr., Niagara Falls
(905) 350-0801
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 350-0801

PORT COLBORNE

DeWitt Center Public School
100 DeWitt Center Dr., Port Colborne
(905) 884-3600
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 887-2512

St. Mary's Public School
100 St. Mary's Dr., Port Colborne
(905) 884-3600
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 887-2512

St. Michael's Public School
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St. Thomas Public School
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St. Vincent's Public School
100 St. Vincent's Dr., Port Colborne
(905) 884-3600
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 887-2512

PORT KAITUMA

A.B. Wigg Public School
100 A.B. Wigg Dr., Port Kaituma
(905) 884-3600
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 887-2512

St. Mary's Public School
100 St. Mary's Dr., Port Kaituma
(905) 884-3600
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 887-2512

St. Michael's Public School
100 St. Michael's Dr., Port Kaituma
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St. Thomas Public School
100 St. Thomas Dr., Port Kaituma
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Carleton Place Public School
100 Carleton Place Dr., Carleton Place
(905) 884-3600
A Child's World
Child Care On-site
(905) 887-2512

St. Mary's Public School
100 St. Mary's Dr., Carleton Place
(905) 884-3600
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St. Michael's Public School
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St. Vincent's Public School
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Lockview Public School
100 Lockview Dr., Lockview
(905) 884-3600
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St. Mary's Public School
100 St. Mary's Dr., Lockview
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St. Michael's Public School
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UPFRONT

■ **TIPS:** Confidentiality of informants taken very seriously

Crime Stoppers needs better south Niagara profile

ALLAN BOWEN
Pelham News

Despite impressive statistics — such as \$33 million of illegal drugs taken off the street, 3,440 crimes solved and 1,033 arrests — there's still more for improvement in Crime Stoppers, particularly in south Niagara.

Crime Stoppers board members Marilyn Davis and Ian Smith, left, and Ian Smith, right, stand with Welland Mayor Frank Caproni at last week's meeting with Mayor Frank Caproni to raise awareness about the service during Crime Stoppers month.

Davis said the bulk of calls the agency receives are from communities such as St. Catharines and Niagara Falls, where the service has been well promoted — not Welland and Port Colborne.

Now, she said, the organization is trying to do a better job promoting itself in south Niagara, too.

"We don't have a lot of presence down here and that's what we're trying to promote, to get more presence in the Port Colborne and Welland areas," she said.

Davis said she visited the Welland Incentive Market in October to provide information about the organization to people, "trying to get the word out there."

Crime Stoppers office staff could not provide information about the number of calls generated from different parts of the region.

The woman at the Crime Stoppers office commented Tuesday said that information is protected in part of the organization's commitment



Crime Stoppers board members Marilyn Davis, left, and Ian Smith, right, stand with Welland Mayor Frank Caproni after holding the Crime Stoppers flag at Welland city hall. The organization is focusing on providing its services in south Niagara communities, which has been lagging behind other parts of Niagara.

to the integrity of informants.

Confidentiality, she said, is something the organization takes very seriously.

"One of the original people who was involved in Crime Stoppers was told to testify, and he had the document in his hand [that identified the spore] and he ate it in court," she said, laughing.

She was referring to a March 2014 incident, where Mississauga County Crime Stop-

pers executive director Richard Mason was charged with contempt in a U.S. courtroom for refusing to divulge details about an anonymous tip.

"When it comes to anything dealing with justice or anything like that, we're very hushy about letting our information out at all," she said.

That confidentiality, she added, while explaining why she would not provide her name, even applies to the identity of Crime Stoppers

workers.

"It could put them into a situation where they have a problem with safety, name or loss," she said.

Despite the focus on confidentiality, Davis said some people "don't understand that it really is anonymous."

Smith said the majority of people who call Crime Stoppers are more interested in doing the right thing than collecting a reward.

Although \$25,000 in reward

money has been paid out for tips since the program's Niagara launch in 1985, he said far more people have provided vital information about crimes who didn't want to be rewarded.

Less than 30 per cent of informants claim the rewards to which they're entitled.

People just want to get it off their chest. A lot of people use Crime Stoppers as a way to help their conscience," he said. "Some people don't

CRIME STOPPERS OF NIAGARA

Accomplishments in the past 30 years

1,933
arrests
3,340
cases cleared
\$80,580
rewards paid
\$5,903,260
property recovered
\$30,775,020
in drugs seized

even bother with the reward" for the majority of people who know about a crime, just having a clear conscience is enough compensation.

One Crime Cap plan said he'd like to see in the upcoming year a list of vendors that have targeted the city in recent months.

"Hopefully we'll get some calls on this graffiti," he said. "There are people out there who know who's doing it, so hopefully someone will come forward."

People can report crime by calling 1-800-222-3373, online at www.niagarastoppers.com or by texting 379937 (CRIME) and including the word NIAGARA in the message.

also know the rewards better than we

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LOCAL NEWS

■ MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS: Fonthill construction could start in August

Pelham poised to build \$37M multiuse complex

WEND CAMPBELL
Pelham resident

After more than a decade of talking about it, construction of a Pelham multiuse complex could commence this year.

Pelham town council has agreed to put \$37 million into the municipality's 2016 capital budget for the undertaking.

A \$48.4-million capital budget was recommended by council's committee on the whole Monday night

The budget will go to a regular council meeting next week for approval.

Treasurer Carl Pappo had originally recommended the complex for 2017.

Chief administrative officer Darren O'Leary said the \$37 million and loan would allow for start of multiuse complex construction in August.

But, he said, approving the budget item does not mean council is approving the community centre.

Council must still receive

a final design for a two-level and arena, gym, walking track and community rooms. The design may come in March.

Council could reject it, O'Leary said.

Wend O'Leary, Peter Pappo and a lot of work has been done over the past two years. The public is watching closely to be assured of the group's affordability.

Mayor Dave Augustyn compared the process to buying a house.

The \$37 million in the

2016 budget is a pre-approval for a mortgage, he said. But it doesn't mean you have to buy a house.

Pappo said that in her 2016 operating budget presentation in a few weeks she will outline options on how to cover the \$37-million cost. It could be a one-time debt or loans spread over a number of years. She will then also explain the effect on local tax rates.

Meanwhile, Augustyn said, the town will continue

to approach federal and provincial governments for grants for the community centre.

In addition to presenting the 2016 capital budget, Pappo laid out projections for the next five, 10 and 20 years.

A lot, she said, depends on the pace of residential and commercial development in the new east Fonthill area. That's what is clear, however, will remain cloudy.

Another major item in the

2016 capital budget is \$2.47 million for an extension of Pelham Town Square east of Sutton Street. It will be a major road into new Fonthill, ending at Rice Road.

Another project is a side-walk along Regional Road 20 to H.L. Crowley Secondary School.

The budget also sets aside \$166,000 for a public art feature at Rice Road and Regional Road 20, to welcome people to town. O'Leary said it could involve a competition among artists.



Keep hydrants clear of snow

By keeping fire hydrants clear of snow, homeowners can save time and perhaps lives.

Pelham Fire Department is asking its residents to keep fire hydrants clear and accessible this winter, especially during snowstorms.

"At the call every second counts," said fire prevention officer Sophie Holston. "Being able to quickly connect to a hydrant means the firefighters can limit suppression time." Beyond hydrants, each pumper truck has a limited on-board water source. In rural

areas, tanker trucks are used to supply water that is transferred to a portable tank.

Bereavement worker shares story of personal loss

After a career of working as a bereavement support facilitator, a Niagara woman is sharing her own story of a personal struggle with loss.

In her first book called *12 Weeks of Mourning and Beyond: Uncharted Territory After Sudden Death*, published by FreePress, Seneca resident Sandy McKay wrote about her own treatment at the Walter Cancer Centre in St. Catharines following the unexpected death of her husband Rick in 2010.

Despite 25 years of working as a bereavement support facilitator and palliative educator McKay found coping with loss was not as easy as expected. The book is available for purchase online at the FreePress Bookstore, Amazon and most major online retailers. Book users can also purchase from Kobo, Nook, Kindle, GooglePlay and the iTunes Bookstore.

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Help encourage 'social infrastructure' investments

You might recall that during the summer there were no grants available from the potential of federal government for quality of life investments like recreational facilities.

In July, I wrote that "since there are currently no federal or provincial grants available like a potential new community centre, the town will continue to lobby for a policy change and for funding."

In August, I asked that you assist the town's efforts, writing "during this national election, please ask your local candidates to ensure that the Canadian government will also help fund improvements to our quality of life — like new recreational and cultural facilities."

Since then, Canadians elected a new federal government. During the election cam-

paign, the Liberal party promised "Over the next decade, we will invest almost \$20 billion more in Canada's social infrastructure."

What did they mean by "social infrastructure?"

They meant investments that improve quality of life for millions of Canadians like investments in affordable housing, seniors' facilities, early learning and child care and cultural and recreational infrastructure."

This could mean great news for Pelham: it could help make our potential community centre more achievable. And it's one of the reasons why Pelham council recently voted and \$37 million in the town's 2016 budget toward constructing a proposed community centre.

You see, previous federal and provincial grants only funded project local councils already

included in their approved capital budgets.

Now, I am asking again for your help with our lobbying efforts. Last week Federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau launched 2016-17 pre-budget consultations.

He "called upon Canadians to share their thoughts on how to better support the middle class, create jobs, and set the right conditions for long-term prosperity and stronger economic growth."

The federal government is seeking feedback from Canadians on a number of topics, including what infrastructure needs can best help grow the economy, protect our environment and meet your priorities locally?

Therefore, I encourage you to participate in the federal government's pre-budget consultations and suggest they help fund cultural

and recreational facilities with the provincial governments and municipalities.

Please share our thoughts with your local candidates on (p.34) and follow the options for online consultations (including via Facebook and Twitter).

You can also write our Honourable Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance, Department of Finance Canada, 80 Elgin St., Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0G2.

With your help, we can encourage the federal government to help make social infrastructure investments — like for a Pelham community centre — a priority and a reality.

You can contact Mayor Don Augustine at mayor@pelham.ca or contact columnist www.pelhamreporter.blogspot.ca.



Calchas is shown in this undated photo.

Shipwrecks: Calchas burned after 26 years on the water

SHIP CALHAS
 For Postmedia Network

The British freighter Calchas was built at Belfast, Northern Ireland, and completed Jan. 11, 1949.

It went to work for the Green Steamship Co. Ltd. and served a decade in its colours before joining the Glen Line Ltd. at Glasgow in 1957.

It may have been on a five-year charter, as in 1958 it was renamed Calfax, again for Green Shipping, and served under the Blue Funnel Line. After 26 years of ocean trading, the vessel finally came through the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1975, but its time inland was brief.

On July 22, 1973, Calchas caught fire at Port Kaituma, 120 miles and became a total loss. The burned-out hull was towed to nearby Kookaburra wharf on Oct. 23, 1973, and broken up for scrap by the Scots Ship Iron & Steel Co.

Illustration by C. J. B. 2014, 2015

LOCAL NEWS

■ BUSINESS

More job seekers skew employment stats

NON-TRADER
Pelham News

Niagara's unemployment rate is continuing a five-month rise that began in August.

For the month, it's as close as they might come.

Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, released last Friday, has December's unemployment rate in St. Catharines-Niagara at 8 per cent.

Nine of the Atlantic provinces, among many jurisdictions only Montreal (8.5 per cent) and Windsor (8.7 per cent) fared worse last month.

While job numbers are disproportionately represented by seasonal employment in Niagara, the statistics show a monthly tick up from 8.8 per cent in August.

However, Statistics Canada analyst Vincent Pemas cautions the recent seasonally adjusted unemployment figures can be misleading.

Other employment statistics paint a not-so-dim picture, he said.

While unemployment was up a full percentage point from a year ago, another figure is at play — higher labour force participation.

Over a year — from December to December — there were 18,708 more people in the labour force, but only 10,880 more people were working, Pemas said. The majority of those were registered by working-age men.

"Although there were more people working, not enough jobs were created for everybody who came into the labour force looking for work," he said. "That's why our unemployment rate went up a full point."

"There's more activity in the labour market, so you'll need more (jobs) to bring the unemployment rate down. Over the year, you actually had employment growth."

Pemas said the proportion of working

people age 15 and over was 60.2 per cent. That's up nearly three percentage points from a year ago.

Statistics Canada's census metropolitan area for St. Catharines-Niagara does not include Cambridge or West Lincoln.

Ontario as a whole was the only province with a growth in employment in December, opening a net gain of 25,860 jobs to help lower the province's unemployment rate from 10.7 per cent to 9.8 per cent.

The news for Niagara comes on the heels of a major economic report released December that painted a bright picture for the region.

December's Ontario Economic Update said employment in the Hamilton-Niagara Peninsula economic region expanded at a faster pace in 2009 than in previous years.

The St. Catharines-Niagara census metro area led with a near five per cent rise in employment, while employment growth in the Hamilton census area is at a 1.2 per cent pace this year and Hamilton has growth of around one per cent per year.

It also says service-producing industries, including tourism and health care, have been sources of employment growth recently. Concern is in the manufacturing sector, however, he said.

The report was created by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Credit Union of Ontario, with support from the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce.

Niagara Region economic director Rob Segar said market and labour force participation rates are at play in the latest job data.

"There has (also) been recent evidence, through individual firm reports, of sizable hiring by a number of manufacturing small to medium enterprises throughout Niagara," he said. "I would agree that the manufacturing outlook is positive, (but) with some

challenges. And that's particularly for those whose operations serve the energy sector."

Mishka Rubin, CEO of the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, said the January unemployment rate was lower this year than last but winter was higher.

"However, the participation rate is also higher than it was in

summer and much higher than it was last year," she said. "And the employment rate is significantly higher than it was last year and still higher in November or December than it has been all summer."

That is one people are in the workforce is a "good thing," she said.

"The employment rate is also

winding up — that's also (good). Basically, what's happening is more people are entering the workforce and more of them are finding jobs."

"Of course, we need to be creating more jobs here," Rubin said.

"Every region with an unemployment rate greater than six per cent needs to be creating more jobs."

Dr. Kimberly Dobson



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LOCAL NEWS

■ **ABROAD:** Niagara native and photographer Erin Wilson has been living in Kurdish region of Middle Eastern country for past two years

Capturing hearts in Iraq

FRANK REIMAN
Fotobeta Network

For a Niagara woman living and working in Kurdish Iraq, washing children get much-needed heart surgeries has been overwhelming.

"I and some nurses can't get around that we can do that. That we as humans can open up a heart and with a needle and thread and that, and then that little person gets to grow up and be an adult human," says Erin Wilson.

The Crystal Beach native has been living in Kurdish Iraq for more than two years, and for the past year has been photographing heart surgeries for the non-profit Peemgiphe Love Coalition.

The organization was started after the war in Iraq, to fill a critical need for heart surgeries for children.

"A couple of young guys showed them to try to make a difference and discovered there's a giant backlog of kids waiting for heart surgeries in Iraq," Wilson says. "Like 10,000 — I'm not talking a small amount, there's a huge backlog — and they thought maybe this is something they could help solve."

The backlog, Wilson says, is an outcome of years of war in the area.

"They have some of the highest rates for heart defects in the world — unfortunately, it's more of the byproducts of war. Modern warfare is toxic."

"Chemical weapons have been used extensively in Iraq

and that pollutes the soil, it pollutes the air and now we're seeing the third generation of kids having really profound defects."

Wilson holds the role of communications officer writing stories and taking photographs to show the work being done by Peemgiphe Love, but her job really starts much more.

"I also rock babies in the ICU when they're having a hard time after surgery and I get to hug baby sheep that are born for the sake of the emergency patients and I get to drink tea and listen to displaced women just process some of the horrors that they faced and try to process what it means to start life over somewhere else," she says. "It's all pretty amazing."

Wilson came to the organization through a love of photography. The 38-year-old had travelled to Kurdish Iraq to help start another organization — the One Shot Project — which taught photography skills to the men.

She was introduced to Peemgiphe Love Coalition about the same time as BLS became a real dream.

"I was in Kurdistan doing something different, and all of the sudden for all of us our eyes started to be filled with displaced families and with Syrian refugees and we all felt the need to respond," she says. "And so PLC, they shifted their focus to kind of broader things out not just for the



Erin Wilson.

FRANK REIMAN/PEMGIPIHE LOVE

kids with the heart surgeries, but to include bringing some shelter to these displaced families, so now we have just some honestly amazing projects that we've done just in the past year plus."

The projects, she explains, are aimed at helping families — widows especially — to be self-sufficient through such things as small-business grants.

Wilson's work, travel and photographs are online, but says building relationships

with the people from the area makes up for it.

"It's all about relationship and working with really beautiful people, and I mean I do see a huge amount of heartbreak but at the same time I'm in the middle of a whole lot of really beautiful stories playing out."

PLC's heart surgery program has expanded to Libya, Iran, Nigeria and Pakistan. Wilson was in Libya twice last year documenting heart surgeries.

The organization only works in war-torn countries, Wilson says, because other groups are willing to help elsewhere. BLS is, cases such as Sam in Libya, where the Islamic State has a base.

"There's no way, there's no way that we could ever get into Syria, it's just way too dangerous, but on the last surgical mission we had a few families from Syria whose kids came for heart surgeries. So those kids, their lives were saved and they go back to live

and their whole bodies are carrying this message that they're loved by people from the West, that people care for them and will sacrifice to make sure that they can grow up."

Wilson travelled back home for the holiday season, the first time since she moved to Iraq more than two years ago. While she says it was nice to be back with family and friends, she is starting to feel homesick for her beloved city in Iraq.

If she could send one message to Canadians, it would be to continue being compassionate to refugees fleeing Syria, and to take the time to research bad sentiments and wrong facts that cross through social media.

"The people that could make a real home, the people that are sponsored to come, those are the educated, professional, able-bodied people that could be to rebuild Syria, but you can't do that cause you're dead," Wilson says.

She says that while time in Canada is "highly important" and that helping these people now is only an investment in Canada's future.

"I am very certain that whenever I'm being contacted to these Syrian refugees now is going to come back troubled to Canada within a decade."

For more information on Wilson's work visit www.peemgiphe.org.

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Safety is an essential experience in a child's development. Throughout the program, children will learn how to stay safe. Parents will receive a list of key skills and the Pelham Arena, 100 Oakboro Rd., Fonthill.

For more information, please contact Jule Cook at 905-892-2607 ext. 329 or jcook@pelham.ca

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Visit www.pelham.ca/career-opportunities for more information and to apply online.

Pathstone's Ellis Kats of retiring after 7 years at helm

GRAVEYARD
Pathstone's Kats

It all comes down to timing for Ellis Kats.

For seven years, he steered the region's children's mental health agency through growth, labour disputes, changes to services and now a new facility for Pathstone Mental Health in Oakville.

His calendar is always full. Any personal plans he makes are at least six weeks in advance. That is just the price of the job.

But holding his grandfather has changed his perspective on a number of things.

So at the end of this week, Kats will step down from his post as Pathstone's CEO, leaving his future in the hands of a new generation of leaders.

"This is the right time. I am a grandfather now, and I want to spend more time with my family," Kats said. "The capital campaign was most successful. I think we could have happened fast, and if I were to stay around any longer, Pathstone would begin the next

big project and I would step to see it through, which would be a year or more. So now is the right time to leave."

The 61-year-old is stepping down as Pathstone is nearing completion of the new facility, presently under construction. Pathstone needed \$5 million to build the facility, and ended up raising \$5.2 million. The extra money will be put toward the mortgage on the building so more resources can be directed to clinical staff and services, Kats said.

Kats said he is most proud of Pathstone's efforts to reduce the stigma that surrounds mental health.

"It was something as simple as adding the words 'mental health' to our name. Before that, it wasn't clear what we were. Pathstone was 'the' place. That way we were right up front with it, and people knew what we were all about."

The annual "Shutter the Stigma" campaign helped change minds and showed that mental illness should be treated no differently than any other ailment of the human



Pathstone CEO Ellis Kats, pictured at the offices in Thorold in this file photo, is retiring after being in charge for the past seven years.

body. Kats said the campaign not only reduced general stigma, but encouraged people who needed help to come forward.

"We know if the campaign were successful, that our case load would increase," he said. The growth in clinical pathways pressure on Pathstone, which had to manage more clients at a time when funding increases were not

the norm. As a result, Pathstone ended up with long waiting lists of children in need of care.

"That is something we've only really got a handle on in the last few months," he said. Pathstone has changed its service delivery methods for clients.

In the past, Pathstone clients would be assessed and then wait until the appropriate

decision is available for an appointment. Children could be waiting up to six months before being seen, Kats said. The only exception would be children or youth in immediate crisis, such as those who may hurt themselves or others. These cases are seen immediately.

Under the new model, a care worker calls the family within three weeks of initial

contact, and then works steps in constant contact with the family until the child leaves Pathstone's care.

Kats said the process is somewhat more labour intensive but gets children and youth off the waiting list and into treatment much faster.

"I don't know what will happen should we face a real increase in demand, or how Pathstone will have to adapt if that situation arises, but right now it is making a significant difference."

Kats said he is staying in Niagara and will stay in contact with Pathstone as a volunteer, where he will continue to work with the agency on the completion of its new facility on Fourth Avenue in St. Catharines.

An interim CEO is expected to be named soon by Pathstone's board of directors, which will then begin a candidate search for a permanent replacement, Kats said.

part of the Pathstone.ca website.

Twitter: @Pathstone

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LOCAL NEWS



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■ RIDE TO CONQUER CANCER

Cyclists getting geared up for 200-km charity ride

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Pelham News

A Niagara team is training for a two-day, 200-kilometre bike ride to raise money for Pelham's Margaret Cancer Centre.

Kristin Pratt and Debra Harrison, of Fortville, are preparing to participate in the ninth annual Fortville Ride to Conquer Cancer on June 11 and 12. The women are part of a team that will raise funds for cancer research and the Toronto cancer centre.

Pratt, owner of Studio 26 in Fortville, and team leader, will host an information session at her studio on Sunday, Jan. 24, at 5 a.m. A representative from the ride will be present to answer any questions and assist people with signing up.

The event at Studio 26 will provide information about Pelham's Margaret Cancer Centre, which is one of the top-five cancer research centres in the world. The representative will explain how the money raised will be used. There will also be tips given on how to fundraise and how to train.

Harrison said for anyone local who thinks the Toronto cancer centre doesn't assist them, the research foundation helps all Canadians.

"If there is breakthrough research, it's not just going to be for Torontonians. It's going to be for all Canadians. That's the way I look at it. I want to make sure we've got the best cancer care we've got in our country and it's going to be shared," Harrison said.

There will be two free opening classes offered at the information event. The first will begin at 9:30 a.m., and the second at 10:30 a.m. The 45-minute classes will be an opportunity for people to interact and get an idea of what to expect if they decide to ride.

Pratt said the free opening classes are meant to encourage people to participate



ALLENBERG/PELHAM NEWS

Kristin Pratt, leader of the Five Fortville cycling team training for the 2005 Fortville Ride to Conquer Cancer, will host an information session about the event later this month.

in the ride.

"People think 'I can't do that,' but you really can. You have a sense of accomplishment who did it and completed it. It's a really great event and it's so well done and so well organized," Pratt said.

Pratt and Harrison were part of a team of seven riders who for their first time rode the lengthy route in 2015.

There are multiple routes from which to choose, including a Toronto to Niagara route. The team has chosen to participate in the Fortville/Niagara ride. Route maps aren't yet available, but the team is preparing for any ride conditions possible.

"They don't post what the ride is, so you don't know how hard the ride will be. We go out and practice. We don't know how hard the hills are going to be," said Harrison.

To prepare, the participants will train while it's raining, in case it rains during the ride. They will also find challenging hills to conquer. For more information about the ride and where to register visit www.rideconquercancer.com.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **VACATIONS:** Some all-inclusive packages still low priced; day trips more popular now

Travellers adapting to impact of the low loonie

RON FRASER
Pelham News

For some heart-seeking travellers, sailing on the travel ship *Liberty* has led to a Caribbean island vacation.

"Some are taking me," I found this great deal on some online magazine," said Ron Fraser, Veranda Travel's St. Catharines office manager. "I'll say, 'you do know that's in U.S. dollars!'"

"Just recently, I said to one woman who found me dead, 'you're selling a Canadian exchange rate of \$1.13, it's now \$1.48 — that's huge,'" she said.

With the loonie trading below 71 cents US as of last week, that amounts to a nearly 40 per cent markup in a typical exchange. That's roughly a 12 per cent increase over the same time last year.

It could eventually mean a big price hike for travel packages and plans based on American dollar conversions.

However, Fraser said, a good travel agent will advise you there are still some nice deals with all-inclusive vacation packages. Specifically, they're those Canadian-dollar contracts that operators made months before the loonie fell.

"People are getting some really good deals because these contracts were written so long ago — and they have not been updating to us about currency variances in the new future," he said. "But prices are liable to change constantly now."

If you see a great bargain, you need to jump on it. And if you deal with a reputable Canadian travel agent, they'll tell you that," said Fraser, a veteran in the industry.

Meanwhile, a report late last month from the Canadian Board of Canada noted another trend — lower gas prices have convinced Canadians to vacation closer to home this year. It said the trend is expected to continue this year.

Following an increase of 24 per cent this year, overnight travel within Canada is expected to grow by another 24 per cent in 2010.

American visits to Canada,



Ron Fraser, manager at Veranda Travel & Cruises, talks about how the sinking Canadian dollar is affecting travel plans.

powered by the strong U.S. dollar, are expected to rise as well.

The survey, reported by the Canadian Press, showed overnight cross-border travel to the U.S. was down about nine per cent in the first nine months of 2010 over the same period last year.

Fraser is among the top American destinations for international travellers, including one in the Canadian who came the border. But for the first time in several years, travel from Canada to the Sunshine State is declining.

Fraser said, owner of Four Point Travel in St. Catharines, said most Canadian travellers who regularly go down south are still going, but for shorter stays.

"We are also finding that a lot more people are travelling from Toronto's airport rather than Buffalo," said the 20-year travel industry veteran. "When going to Florida's Las Vegas, it has been cheaper to go through Buffalo."

Meanwhile, others are sim-

ply deciding trips to America are a U.S. dollar-priced destination are just worth it.

"Right now I'm dealing with someone who was originally going to Florida and wanted to drive," said Fraser. "Now they're about to book an all-inclusive to the Caribbean."

Fraser said Cuban trips remain another hot market and are relatively unaffected so far by the Canadian dollar slump.

Most of these packages are being paid in Canadian dollars, she added.

"This is actually one of the biggest fall (losses) we've ever had, and this is my 25th year," said Ron MacKinnon, owner of Old Post Travel in St.

Catharines.

"We have not seen a decline in travel. What we notice is our clients, if they are going to the U.S., may not be upgrading but downgrading a category in their travel," MacKinnon said. "But they're still travelling. They'll go other places."

She said since U.S. destinations, like hotels and golf courses, are offering exchange-rate deals for Canadian visitors.

"In general, it's not less travel," said MacKinnon. "It's different travel."

— Ron Fraser/The Canadian Press

don't have a travel agent
Pelham News, January 14, 2010

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■ **NAGARA REGION:** Update provided on cease to qualify rule initiative

No evictions since housing change

MARYVANE FORTI
Pelham Report

No evictions have taken place since Niagara Regional Housing first implemented its cease to qualify rule last summer, which requires tenants paying market rent to move.

A breakdown of the status of the 170 households impacted as a result of the change was provided to Niagara Region's public health and social services committee last week.

The decision to move market rent tenants out of affordable housing units was made to help defuse the area's long-standing waiting list.

Under the Housing Services Act, tenants who become ineligible for rent-guaranteed-to-income (RGI) can stay and pay maximum rent, otherwise known as market rent, for 12 months. The rule had not previously been enforced by NRH.

The organization mailed out letters to 170 affected households explaining the change and providing a moving checklist.

Of the 170 letters sent out, 68 households have since requalified for RGI, 49 have moved or given notice and 42 have an outcome that is still pending as of January 14.

In addition, four tenants were deemed overburdened and agreed to move to smaller units. Two more deemed ineligible, six households were determined to be well over the assistance income levels allowed for affordable housing and accommodations were made for 11 households with extraordinary circumstances, including tenants considered elderly or frail.

As of yet, no evictions have taken place and all impacted tenants have been in contact with housing.

"Our goal is to have the right people in our housing that really need it," NRH chief executive officer Ellen McIntosh said.

Housing's website, as of Dec. 31, lists a 6,830 household list. That number is up four per cent over December 2014. While he felt a more sensitive

approach to the situation could have been taken, Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Redelick said NRH did what it is required to do.

"For every person in one of those units who ought not be there, there's 10 families outside in need of that type of housing," he said.

Wendell Coan, George Marshall took issue with tenants who were unsuccessfully occupying larger units, or misreporting information that would keep them from qualifying for affordable housing.

"It's not a birthright to get into these housing units," he said.

At the same time, he felt concern for seniors who were being asked to move from units in which some have lived for more than 30 years.

The questioned why regional council's requested memorandum, which came forward in October and would have put a stay on evictions until June 30, 2016, was not approved by the housing board.

The board, Sullivan said, felt "putting a moratorium on this at this point was not necessary" due to the timeline required by the eviction process.

Because evictions can and often do go through the Landlord and Tenant Board, it can take several weeks or even months to come to a resolution, she said.

A series of notices, and time between each, is required before a board hearing, which also takes time to schedule, can be requested.

The earliest anyone could potentially be evicted from the impacted group is May 2016, McIntosh said.

While the board was aware of the timeline required by the eviction process, that offered no assistance to impacted tenants to help lessen their situation, Marshall said.

Monthly updates on the cease to qualify initiative will be provided to council going forward.

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Tel: 905-881-0000

■ **ENTERTAINMENT**

B-52s will roar into Fallsview in April

New wave legends The B-52s are heading to the Fallsview Casino April 25. The seven-piece band, known for their 1970s hits "Rock Lobster" and "Love Shack," the Adams. Georgia group performs April 25 at 9 p.m. Tickets start at \$45.

Former Tonight Show host Jay Leno returns to Fallsview April 21 and 22 (tickets start at \$50), along with Neil Sedaka who will perform April 18 and 20 (\$35) and Grand Funk Railroad April 20 (\$25). From April 1 to 15 will be an extended run of Sade Gold Motown (\$25). Tickets for all shows are on sale now at the Fallsview box office and all Ticketmaster outlets. www.ticketmaster.ca

LOCAL NEWS

■ **HOPE CENTRE:** Agency aims to provide longer-term assistance for homeless people

'They'd go from shelter to shelter' for help

ALLAN KOWAR
Pelham News

As brutal weather returns to Niagara, Hope Centre is doing its part to ensure no one is being left in the cold.

"We have available space we're willing to serve anyone that's in need," said Hope Centre executive director Mark Carl.

Despite changes to the agency's homeless outreach programs that led to the closure of its decade-old emergency shelter Hope House nine months ago, Carl says Hope Centre is continuing to meet the needs in the community.

Program administrator Brenda Langman says many of the people who stayed at Hope House prior to the changes were back knocking on the door soon after their 30-day stay had ended.

"They'd go from shelter to shelter, and then they'd be back," she says.

But now, instead of a revolving door at Hope House, the agency is working to address the underlying problems that keep clients coming back.

Although stays at the former Hope House at 114 Dufferin St. were limited to 30 days, the agency transferred that housed into a 14-bed transitional housing facility last March where clients can now stay for up to one year. During that stay, Hope Centre staff work with clients to resolve problems that led them to

become homeless in the first place.

"It's more than just a temporary bed for the night," Carl says. "We're asking longer-term solutions to allow people to kind of get back on their feet."

Langman says the changes allow "more of a permanent home for them, instead of 'You have to get out of here in 30 days and find somewhere else.'"

"That way, we can keep them housed and their supports are here. It's really positive that way. They don't have to go anywhere else."

Some of the assistance offered at the transitional housing facility include life skills, budgeting classes, mental health service referrals, employment help and counselling.

Meanwhile, Carl says people in need of free short-term emergency housing are not being left behind.

Hope Centre has set up five Welland area beds to meet the people in need of temporary accommodation.

From there, people who need additional support can stay within the transitional housing facility for further assistance.

Hope Centre also provides free support for "chronically homeless individuals that have mental health support" for a total of 24 options for people struggling with homelessness.

Additional beds were added to homeless shelters in neighbouring commu-



Hope Centre's program administrator Brenda Langman and executive director Mark Carl say changes implemented for homelessness programs are improving the lives of its clients.

munities. Five more beds were added to homeless shelters in St. Catharines and 38 more beds were added to a facility in Niagara Falls.

Before the changes were made, Carl says, many of the people staying at Hope House were from St. Catharines and Niagara Falls.

Because of the expansion of facili-

ties in the neighbouring communities, people can now also stay at shelters closer to home.

Carl says the changes to the programs have been "slow moving, getting it all going, but it's up and running and it's working really well."

And there's already a growing number of success stories show-

ing that the revised program seems to be working.

"We've had a lot of success. A lot of individuals have achieved sustainable housing out of the program, and are back working part time, back employed," he says.

"We have a success story of a gentleman named David. He was in an emergency bed and went to transitional housing. Within three or four months, he has his own apartment and he's back working full time."

Carl encourages people to call 905-709-0744 ext. 200 if they know of someone in need of emergency housing.

"We're pretty proud of what the way we've changed our homelessness services," he says.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **TRIBUNE BOYS BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT:** Centennial edges E.L. Crossley in a battle between friends and coaching colleagues



PHOTO BY KENNY PETERS, YICORUM NETWORK

Centennial's Jay Clayton, right, defends E.L. Crossley's Chris Holmes in Tribune Boys Basketball Tournament consolation championship action Saturday night in Welland.



E.L. Crossley's Davis Sheperd, No. 8, goes up for a basket against Centennial in Tribune Boys Basketball Tournament consolation championship action Saturday night in Welland.

'Fantastic game' decides consolation title

BORIS FRANK
Pelham Herald

Good things don't only come in threes.

After scoring nine three-pointers in a 15-point victory over the E.L. Crossley Cyclones early in the season, the Centennial Cougars took a more conventional route to the winner's circle in the match in the Tribune Boys Basketball Tournament consolation championship Saturday night in Welland.

Though their outside game was taken away for the sport, with only three of their scorers from beyond the arc going in, the Cougars defeated well and controlled

the ball — especially in the late going — for a 36-33 victory.

In the consolation final, A.N. Myer of Notre Dame knocked off Notre Dame of Welland 39-31. In the consolation, Connor Kalkbrenner paced Centennial in points with 16. Blak Sae, the Cougars player of the game, and Jacob Frey, a Grade 11 student called up from the junior team for the tournament, each scored seven and Jay Clayton and Sheldon Davis six points apiece.

Chris Holmes scored a game-high 22 points for the Cyclones. Ben Kalkbrenner, Centennial's player of the game,

added eight.

But said the Cougars didn't allow the ease of their first game of the season against Crossley get in the way of executing a defense-first game plan in the rematch. "We need not to think about that. We know they would be better the more games they played, we assumed they would just as hard as we did," the Grade 11 student said.

He said Centennial couldn't afford to let up against the Cyclones, a division rival and a team coached by Doug Anchuta, a one-time opponent as Cougars head coach Phil Mosley.

"They knew more about

how to play us. They defended us hard today," he said.

It was Mosley's assessment, too.

"This was a fantastic game. They gave us all that we could handle," said Mosley, who spent two years coaching basketball with Anchuta at Welland.

Facing the friend and coaching colleague isn't exactly like playing a mirror image of Centennial's team, Mosley said. "We may not have the same game plan, but we share the same coaching philosophy."

Furthermore, the Cyclones were seeking to stop a four-game losing streak in the

consolation final at Centennial's oldest high school tournament and was their first B title since 2009.

"We've got to take care of the ball," Kalkbrenner said. "Other than that, I thought we were opportunistic, and I thought we controlled them."

"I feel we executed our game plan really well."

Kalkbrenner said the Cyclones had to smother the Cougars on defense if they wanted to avoid a repeat of their performance in the first meeting of the season.

"We had to play tight and take away their threats. We couldn't allow them to reach space," the Grade 11 student

said.

A Crossley victory in the consolation final wouldn't have been as significant as Kalkbrenner is concerned.

"Comparing it to the last game, it would have been an upset, but I think we're a better team than we give ourselves credit for," he said.

Centennial's last B title was in 2011 when it defeated Crossley 36-34. The Cougars beat the A.N. Myer Mustangs in the second round the following year and lost to the Notre Dame Fighting Irish in the championship final in 2014.

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STRONGER CIVIL RIGHTS

Police to enforce new rules of background checks

WILL SANDHUR
Pelham Herald

Niagara Regional Police are ready for changes to what information they can release from background checks.

The Ontario government recently passed legislation, called the Police Records Check Reform Act, that will affect thousands of people in Niagara every year. Employers and volunteer organizations often use the checks as a screening process.

They also are used for applications in professional licensing, home rental, child custody and foster care.

The new legislation stated: "The information goes directly back to the applicant, not a courtesy by agency or employee."

Gary Holden, manager of corporate records and information management for the NRP, said the service is already following protocols the legislature used as a basis for the new act.

"We are reviewing our own all process and increasing it to become a little more efficient," Holden said. "There are some trends we will make."

"Police services have been asking to have the process legislated for years. It should be the same no matter where you are."

Niagara police staff handle about 30,000 background checks per year.

They only release information from background checks with the permission of the person involved, and the person reviews what police plan to release.

If someone objects to any of the information, he or she can ask for "reconsideration" to have the data purged from the file before it's released.

"The information goes directly back to the applicant, not a courtesy by agency or employee," Holden said. "That way, if there is anything to show that they feel is incorrect, we can make any modifications that are appropriate before they take it back to the community."

The checks cost \$45 for an employment background



Criminal background check application form with glasses and ballpoint pen.

check and \$15 for a background check on someone looking to volunteer. The department runs on a cost-recovery basis.

The new legislation puts limits on the release of non-conviction information when a person has had charges

dropped or been found not guilty at trial.

Police anywhere in the province will only be allowed to disclose non-conviction information if the individual is in a position of trust or authority over vulnerable individuals such as children

or the elderly. More contact with police that did not result in charges won't be released.

Community Safety and Correctional Services Minister Victor Nadeau said the new law is a balance between public safety and the strengthening

of civil rights.

"The bill puts clear, consistent and effective rules in place for the first time in Ontario's history to make sure that Ontarians are no longer negatively impacted by records of police contacts that do not pertain to criminal activity," Nadeau said.

"The legislation is the outcome of negotiations between police chiefs, civil liberties and human rights groups and community safety and mental health advocates, Nadeau said. The busiest times for requests for NRP-issued background checks is the fall, Holden said.

"We always have a backlog in September," Holden said. "It's the busiest time for all the police services on the province. Hockey leagues are starting up. Schools are starting up. There are many placements in universities. It's a matter of trying to stay on top of the volume."

Will Sandhur is a

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